

Private Selby Harris (Number 414977) of the 5th Battalion, Canadian Mounted Rifles, Canadian Expeditionary Force, having no known last resting-place, is commemorated in the stone of the Canadian National Memorial which stands on Vimy Ridge.

(Right: The image of a cap badge of the 5th Battalion, Canadian Mounted Rifles, is from the Wikipedia Web-site.)

(continued)



His occupations prior to military service recorded as those of *fisherman, labourer and miner*, it may be that Selby Harris was the young man whose name is found on the passenger list of the SS *Ivermore* for the crossing of November 28, 1911, from Port aux Basques, Newfoundland, to North Sydney, Cape Breton, in the Canadian province of Nova Scotia. He was apparently on his way to Sydney to seek employment as a labourer.

All that may otherwise be said – and with any certainty - is that he was in Cape Breton during a part of the month of August of 1915, for that was where and when he enlisted.

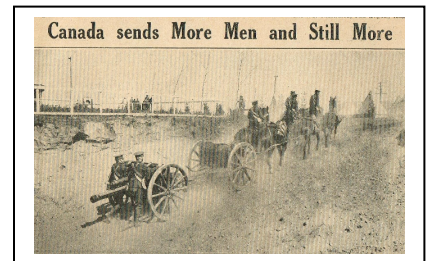
His first pay records show that it was on August 2, 1915, likely in the industrial city of Sydney, that the Canadian Army first remunerated Private Harris for his services to the Canadian Army. It was also on that date that he was *taken on strength* by the 40th Battalion (Nova Scotia).

Eleven days afterwards, on August 13 – and *confirmed* on this occasion in his papers as having been in Sydney - he underwent a medical examination - which found him...*fit for the Canadian Over Seas Expeditionary Force* - and was also attested by an official of the local magistrature.

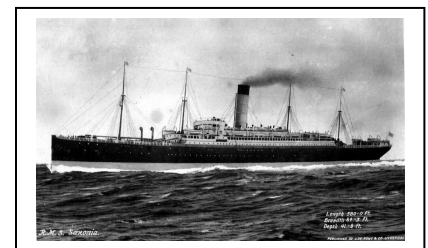
Finally, three days later again, on August 16, the Officer Commanding the 40th Battalion, Lieutenant-Colonel A.G. Vincent, concluded the enlistment formalities when he declared – on paper – that...*Selby Harris...having finally been approved and inspected by me this day...I certify that I am satisfied with the correctness of this Attestation**.

**The 40th Battalion had been mobilized on May 11 of 1915 at Camp Aldershot in Nova Scotia and had undergone its early training there but it had then been relocated to Camp Valcartier in Québec on June 21. Thus it may well be that Private Harris travelled there, to Québec, during that three-day interim of August 13 to 16.*

(Right: *Canadian artillery being put through its paces at the Camp at Valcartier. In 1914, the main Army Camp in Canada was at Petawawa. However, its location in Ontario – but also at some distance from the Great Lakes – made it impractical for the despatch of troops overseas. Valcartier was apparently built within weeks after the Declaration of War. – photograph (from a later date in the War) from *The War Illustrated**)



Two drafts from the 40th Battalion had already sailed before the parent unit itself crossed the Atlantic, seemingly to be employed upon arrival in England as re-enforcements for other units already serving on the Continent. It was on October 18, 1915, that Private Harris and the main body of the Battalion took ship in the port of Québec – in the company of the 41st Battalion of Canadian Infantry – embarking onto His Majesty's Transport *Saxonia**.



**For some six months during the early days of the Great War, the vessel had served to accommodate German prisoners of war. In March of 1915 she then had reverted to service as a troop transport.*

(Preceding page: *The image of the Royal Mail Ship Saxonia is from the Old Ship Picture Galleries web-site.*)

The vessel sailed on the same October 18, then to dock in the English south-coast naval port of Plymouth-Devonport ten days later, on October 28. Private Harris' 40th Battalion was subsequently transported by train the relatively short distance to the fledgling Canadian military camp then being established in the vicinity of the villages of Liphook and Bramshott – to which latter community the camp owed its name - in the southern English county of Hampshire.



The 40th Battalion was apparently the first Canadian unit to be stationed there.

(Right above: *The harbour of Plymouth-Devonport as it was almost a century after the Great War – a lot less busy nowadays - photograph from 2013*)



(Right: *Royal Canadian Legion flags amongst others adorn the interior of St. Mary's Church in the English village of Bramshott. – photograph from 2016*)

But for exactly how long the unit *remained* posted at *Camp Bramshott* is not clear: the 40th Battalion, originally destined to be a unit of 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade of the soon-to-be 3rd Canadian Division, apparently soon afterwards would become re-designated as a reserve battalion* and was then to be transferred to the Kentish coast, to *East Sandling Camp*. When exactly this transfer came about is not clear, but it may well have been between January 22 and February 4 of 1916, as some individual medical reports suggest.

**Before the end of the Great War, Canada was to have despatched overseas two-hundred fifty battalions – although it is true that a number of these units, particularly as the conflict progressed, were below full strength. At the outset, these Overseas Battalions all had aspirations of seeing active service in a theatre of war.*

However, as it transpired, only some fifty of these formations were ever to be sent across the English Channel to the Western Front. By far the majority remained in the United Kingdom to be used as re-enforcement pools and they were gradually absorbed, particularly after January of 1917, by units that had by then been designated as Canadian Reserve Battalions.

Private Harris was admitted into the *Moore Barracks Hospital* by then established to serve the large military complex of *Shorncliffe* – of which *East Sandling* was a subsidiary – situated on the Dover Straits in the county of Kent, and in the vicinity of the harbour and town of Folkestone.

There he was diagnosed as having contracted a venereal problem.

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Having remained in the *Moore Barracks* Hospital for but a single day, Private Harris was thereupon transported to the university city of Cambridge, to *Barnwell Military Hospital* where he was to receive treatment for the following fifty-seven days. It was not to be until April 20 that he was released from there back to *duty* at *Shorncliffe*.

Private Harris was also to suffer financially for his medical misfortune. His pay records suggest that his daily field allowance of ten cents and also fifty cents per diem from his pay of one dollar, was deducted from his income to partially allay the costs of his sixty days – in total - of hospitalization*.

**The Army did not look kindly on soldiers who contracted venereal disease; even though it was not always adhered to - less and less so as the war progressed - there was in place a policy to penalize men who found themselves so diagnosed – as much as half their pay plus the ten-cents per day field allowance was often forfeited.*

Officers, however, were usually treated more kindly and often the diagnosis was documented as NYD (Not Yet Determined) or even PUO (Pain – or Pyrexia (fever) – of Unknown Origin), thus allowing those afflicted to avoid any penalty – or stigma.

(Right: Little remains of Shorncliffe Military Camp today apart from a barracks occupied by Gurkha troops. The Military Cemetery almost alone serves as a reminder of the events of a century ago. – photograph from 2016)



East Sandling, already described as a subsidiary of the large Canadian military complex of *Shorncliffe*, had seen the arrival and departure through its gates of the 2nd Canadian Division when it had taken ship for the Continent in September of 1915. It had also witnessed the transfer of units of the 3rd Canadian Division during the autumn of 1915 and the winter which followed, as they *also* left England through the nearby harbour and town of nearby Folkestone, to disembark some two hours later in Boulogne on the French coast opposite.

Private Harris, *struck off strength* by the 40th Battalion and transferred on paper to the 5th Battalion of the Canadian Mounted Rifles, was now to follow in the footsteps of those other units, sailing for France during the night of June 7, 1916. On the next day, June 8, he reported to the Canadian Base Depot established by that time in the vicinity of the French industrial city of Le Havre, situated on the estuary of the River Seine...and he also became *Trooper Harris**.



It was a day on which drafts from the United Kingdom totalling two-thousand eighty-eight arrived at the Base Depot.

**Even though no longer Mounted, the CMR retained the designation of Trooper.*

(Right above: A view of the coastal town of Folkestone almost a century later as seen from the top of the white cliffs of nearby Dover – photograph from 2009)

(Right: An image of the French port of Boulogne at or about the time of the Great War – from a vintage post-card)



It was to be on only the following day again, on June 9, 1916, that Trooper Harris was despatched from the Base Depot to join his new unit, one soldier of two-thousand thirty-two who were ordered to their various units on that particular day.

He did so as one of a re-enforcement draft of seventy-one *other ranks* recorded in the 5th Battalion CMR War Diary as having reported *to duty* on June 10 in the area of Steenvoorde, France, to where the unit had retired from Belgium six days earlier.

Private Harris was one of twenty-five of the new arrivals who had trained with the 40th Reserve Battalion in England. They were all immediately posted to serve with the Battalion's Company "A".

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The 5th Battalion of the Canadian Mounted Rifles, originally recruited in the area of the Eastern Townships of Québec, was a component of the 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade*, itself an element of the 3rd Canadian Division. The 3rd Division had begun to form in France in December of 1915 – officially coming into being at mid-night of December 31, 1915, and January 1, 1916.



By that time, the 5th Regiment, CMR, had been on the Continent for some two months, since October 24, 1915.

(Right above: Some of the farmland in the area of Messines - near to where the 5th CMR was to first serve - a mine crater from the time of the 1917 British offensive in the foreground – photograph from 2014)

***All of the 8th Brigade's four infantry battalions, as of January 1, 1916, were dis-mounted Canadian Mounted Rifles, the 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th Battalions. Prior to that, the 5th Regiment, CMR, had been a unit of the 2nd Mounted Rifle Brigade and the troopers had, as the name implies, horses.**

In order for the unit to become an infantry battalion, not only were the Regiment's horses sent elsewhere – often to officers serving behind the lines – but the Regiment, not being of regular infantry battalion strength, had to absorb personnel from other Mounted Regiments, units which, while not immediately disbanded, were thereafter no longer active. Thus on January 1, 1916, the CMR Regiments became CMR Battalions.

From that end of October, 1915, until almost a year later in 1916 (see below), the 5th CMR (both Regiment then Battalion) was to be stationed in Belgium; at first it had served at the southern end of the front there, just before the trenches crossed over the frontier into France – Messines and Kortepyp, right on the border, in the forward area and Meteren to the rear are three place-names which often appear in the Battalion War Diary.

It was those first three months of 1916 which afforded to personnel of the 5th Battalion, Canadian Mounted Rifles, the opportunity to learn much about the rigours, the routines and the perils of life in – and out of – the trenches*.

**During the Great War, British and Empire (later Commonwealth) battalions had their time more or less equally divided into three postings: in theory a week was to be spent in the front lines, at times little more than a few metres separating them from the enemy forward positions; a second week was then served in support positions, perhaps a hundred metres or so behind the front; the unit was then withdrawn into reserve – either Brigade, Divisional or Corps Reserve, the former being the nearest to the forward area, the latter the furthest away.*



Of course, things were never as neat and tidy as set out in the preceding format and troops could find themselves in a certain posting at times for weeks on end.

(Right above: A photograph of Canadian troops in support positions somewhere on the Somme in the autumn of 1916, only months earlier having been equipped with those steel helmets and, less visible, British Short Lee-Enfield Mark III Rifles – from Illustration)

In the latter half of March the 3rd Canadian Division had been transferred to the vicinity of *Maple Copse* in the *Ypres Salient*, in a sector just south-east of venerable city of Ypres (today *Ieper*). As for the 5th Battalion, CMR, in particular, it marched through Ypres to its positions on March 24.

The 3rd Canadian Division's area of responsibility in the *Ypres Salient* was the sector surrounding *Maple Copse*; it comprised such places as the village of *Hooge*, and those positions that now went by English names such as *Sanctuary Wood*, *Hill 60*, *Railway Dugouts* and *Mount Sorrel*, a promontory which was to lend its name to the upcoming confrontation.

But first, in April, it had been the 2nd Canadian Division, in a sector to the south of Ypres and towards the Franco-Belgian frontier, which was to receive the attention of the German Army for a few days. For *those* troops, this period was not to be as tranquil as that being experienced during the same time by the 5th Battalion, CMR, and the other units of the Canadian 3rd Division.

The *Action at the St. Eloi Craters* officially took place from March 27 until April 17 of that spring of 1916. St-Éloi was a small village some five kilometres to the south of the Belgian city of Ypres and it was here that the British had excavated a series of galleries under the German lines, there to place quantities of explosives which they detonated on that March 27 and then followed up with an infantry assault.

After a brief initial success the attack had soon bogged down and by April 4 the Canadians were replacing the by-then exhausted British troops.

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They were to have no more success than had the British, and by the 17th of the month, when the battle was called off, both sides were back where they had been some three weeks previously – and the Canadians had incurred some fifteen-hundred casualties.

(Right: *A purported attack in the aftermath of the exploding of a mine under enemy lines – from Illustration*)



However, as previously noted, this confrontation was a 2nd Division affair and Trooper Harris and the other personnel of the 5th Battalion CMR during that period would likely have been disturbed by only the noise of the German artillery some kilometres away.

However, it was to be only some seven weeks after the action at St-Éloi that the relative calm of the 3rd Canadian Division's trenches in the south-east Sector of the *Ypres Salient* was to be shattered by the German attack at *Mount Sorrel*.

It was from June 2 to 13-14 that the confrontation at *Mount Sorrel* - and in the area of *Sanctuary Wood, Maple Copse, Hooge, Railway Dugouts* and *Hill 60* - between the German Army and the Canadian Corps was to be played out.

The Canadians had apparently been preparing an attack of their own on the enemy positions which dominated the Canadian trenches when the Germans delivered an offensive, overrunning the forward areas and, in fact, rupturing the Canadian lines, an opportunity which fortunately they never chose to – or *could* - exploit.

(Right below: *Remnants of Canadian trenches dating from 1915-1916 at Sanctuary Wood – photograph from 2010*)

The British Commander of the Canadian Corps, Sir Julian Byng, had reacted by organizing a counter-attack on the following day, an assault intended to, at a minimum, recapture the lost ground. However, badly organized and poorly supported, the operation had been a disorderly debacle: many of the intended attacks had never gone in – those that did went in piecemeal and the assaulting troops had been cut to pieces - the Germans had remained where they were and the bloodied Canadians had been delivered an extremely heavy casualty list.



(Right: *The Canadian memorial which stands atop Mount Sorrel just to the south-west of the city of Ypres (today Ieper) whose spires and towers may be perceived in the distance – photograph from 1914*)

On that June 2, the 5th Battalion CMR Had been serving in Brigade Support at *Maple Copse*, having been posted there since the night of May 31-June 1.



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The following are excerpts taken from the War Diary of the 5th Battalion, Canadian Mounted Rifles, entry of June 2, 1916: *A red letter day in the history of the Battalion, ever to be remembered by those who lived through it. In the early morning, enemy sprung a mine in part of line held by 4th CMR Battalion and began a bombardment of the Brigade area... and all the ground in MAPLE COPSE and vicinity. The men were kept under cover as much as possible...*

...Several attempts were made to get in touch with the front line but without success. Runners sent out by us... were killed or returned wounded, with news that the communications trenches had been blown in, and that it was impossible to get through enemy barrage fire...

(Right: *Maple Copse Cemetery, adjacent to Hill 60, in which lie many Canadians killed during the days of the confrontation at Mount Sorrel – photograph from 2014*)



A new defensive front line was organized later that day, to be consolidated as much as possible before being used as a jumping-off position for the counter-attack which began at ten minutes past seven on the following morning, June 3.

It is not clear exactly what role the 5th Battalion, CMR, had played: it had held *Maple Copse* all day during a bombardment so intense that apparently no-one could ascertain exactly what was happening elsewhere; attempts had been made – to no avail - to communicate with the survivors of the 4th Battalion, CMR, which had been holding the front-line at the time of the attack but which had been isolated ever since that time.



(Right above: *Railway Dugouts Burial Ground (Transport Farm) today contains twenty-four hundred fifty-nine burials and commemorations. – photograph from 2014*)

Later that evening, when the 5th Battalion, CMR, had been relieved and ordered to retire, it was found to have incurred a total of three-hundred ninety-three casualties. The 8th Canadian infantry Brigade during those same two days, June 2 and 3, had incurred a total of one-thousand nine-hundred fifty – an almost fifty per cent casualty rate.

(Right: *Hill 60 as it remains a century after the events of 1916 and 1917 in the area of Mount Sorrel, the village of Hooge, Sanctuary Wood and Maple Copse: It is kept in a preserved state – subject to the whims of Mother Nature – by the Belgian Government. – photograph from 2014*)



So severe had the losses been that the 8th Brigade, and thus the 5th Battalion, CMR, were to play no further role in the action at *Mount Sorrel*.

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From June 5 when the unit had been withdrawn, until July 16, the 5th Battalion, CMR, stayed in the area of Steenvoorde, a French community well to the west of Ypres and *the Salient*, there to re-enforce and also to re-organize. Of the incoming re-enforcement drafts, the one which was to report *to duty* with the Battalion on June 10 was that of Private Harris who, upon his arrival – and as has been seen in a previous paragraph – was attached to “A” Company.

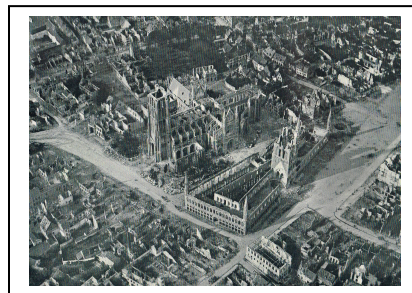
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It was not until the 19th of that July, nine days after Private Harris’ arrival at Steenvoorde, that the 5th Battalion, Canadian Mounted Rifles, having at first travelled by train before marching through the south-eastern outskirts of Ypres itself, once more took its place in the forward area close to Zillebeke, just down the front to the west of the area of *Maple Copse*.

There for four days, even with little or no infantry action reported, the unit still incurred ten *killed*, twelve *wounded* and eight *shell-shocked*. Thus the routine of trench warfare re-commenced with the Battalion closer to the city of Ypres during this cycle than it had been previously.

(Right below: *An aerial photograph, taken in July of 1915, which shows the shell of the medieval city of Ypres, an image entitled Ypres-la-Morte (Ypres the Dead) – By the end of the conflict there was little left standing. – from Illustration*)

On August 22 the War Diarist noticed – and noted – an influx of British and Irish troops in the sector, units which had been transferred from a place called *the Somme*. These troops were soon relieving the Canadians who were being withdrawn from Belgium. On August 23 it was to be the turn of the 5th CMR and, as if to mark a special occasion... *Baths at POPERINGHE allotted to Battalion from 7.30 am until 12 noon, accommodation 150 per hour.*



The 5th CMR Battalion then withdrew once again to the area of North Steenvoorde in north-western France where it was to remain until September 7. The area had been transformed into a training-zone for what was optimistically termed by its planners as *open warfare*; myriad drills were there performed, from the section and platoon level up to - and including - that of both battalion and brigade.

On that September 7 the thirty-seven officers and eight-hundred ninety *other ranks* of the 5th Battalion, Canadian Mounted Rifles, were taken by bus to board a train at Bavinghove Station for the journey south.

(Right: *A number of the public London busses were requisitioned as troop transport during the Great War. Here one is being used by some lucky troops while others, to the right, are obliged to continue on foot. – from Illustration*)



The train pulled out of Bavinghove Station at nine minutes to ten on that evening and pulled *into* the station at Candas at eight o'clock the next morning. After breakfast in a field, there then began a march which was to last some five days and which would end on September 12 in Brigade Reserve at La Boisselle*, the remnants of a village just to the east of the provincial town and centre of Albert.

**Today the village of La Boisselle is known for the huge crater which remains there a century after the detonation of the largest of the nineteen mines exploded just prior to the attack of July 1. At the time it had perhaps been history's largest man-made explosion. The crater, now more than a hundred years old, is still impressive, even today.*



(Right: *The aforementioned Lochnagar Crater caused by the mine – apparently the largest man-made explosion in history up until that date – detonated at La Boisselle – photograph from 2011(?)*)

By that September of 1916, the *First Battle of the Somme* had been ongoing for two months. It had begun with the disastrous attack of July 1, the assault having cost the British Army fifty-seven thousand casualties – in the short space of only four hours - of which some nineteen-thousand dead.

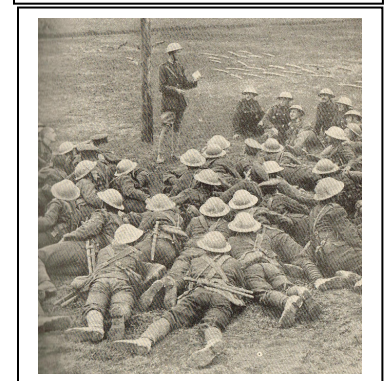
(Right: *Canadian soldiers at work carrying water in the centre of Albert, the already-damaged basilica in the background – from Illustration*)



On that first day of *First Somme*, all but two small units of the attacking divisions had been troops from the British Isles, those exceptions being the two-hundred men of the Bermuda Rifles serving in the Lincolnshire Regiment, and the eight-hundred personnel of the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment which was to lose so heavily on July 1, 1916, at a place called Beaumont-Hamel.

As the battle had progressed, other troops, from the Empire (*Commonwealth*), were brought in; at first it had been the South African Brigade (July 15), then the Australians and New Zealanders (July 23) before the Canadians had entered the fray on August 30 to become part of a third general offensive.

Their first major collective contribution was to be in the area of the two villages of Flers and Courcelette.



(Right above: *An image purporting to be that of a Canadian officer giving instructions to those under his command prior to the attack at Flers-Courcelette (see below), September 1916. – from *The War Illustrated**)

It was early on the morning of September 14 that the 5th Battalion, Canadian Mounted Rifles, finished relieving the 4th Battalion, CMR, whose place it then took in the front lines, from where it was to advance on the next morning.

(Right: *The Canadian Memorial which stands to the side of the Albert-Bapaume Road near the village of Courcellette – photograph from 2015*)



The Battalion had been... *ordered to attack and consolidate, with two companies, the German trenches...and to bomb down...the trenches and establish blocks. These trenches to be held by Infantry Posts as they were cleared by the bombers...* (Excerpt from the 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade War Diary).

During the time of the relief and also for the remainder of that September 14, the Germans reacted violently to the intense movement and to the obvious offensive preparations ongoing on the Canadian side of *No-Man's-Land*. Trooper Harris' unit was to incur a number of casualties during the day.

There was to be little rest on that night of September 14-15: *By 4.00 a.m. all assaulting troops were in positions, and all details in regard to the attack completed...6.20 a.m.. As soon as the barrage lifted the 5th CMR BATTALION attacked in two waves and two full Sections of Battalion bombers...*

(Right: *The village of Courcellette seen from the north just over a century after the events of the First Battle of the Somme – photograph from 2017*)



Objective was reached with few casualties. The trenches were found to have been well manned. Twenty prisoners and three machine guns were taken, about 250 Germans were bayoneted and a large number retreated overland to FABECK GRABEN and were caught by our Machine gun fire (8th Canadian Infantry Brigade War Diary)...

This somewhat positive appraisal of events by the War Diarist notwithstanding, the *few casualties* that the Battalion had incurred totalled two-hundred seventy-seven *killed, wounded and missing* during the day. The 5th Battalion, CMR, thereupon remained in its newly-won positions until the following evening when it had been relieved under cover of darkness and was able to retire to the large military camp at the *Brickfields (La Briqueterie)* in the outskirts of Albert.



(Right above: *Wounded at the Somme being transported in hand-carts from the forward area for further medical attention – from Le Miroir*)

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From then until the end of the month, the 5th Battalion, CMR, was kept in reserve, largely in the area of Bouzincourt. Nevertheless, while out of range of most German ordnance, there was to be little rest and the personnel was kept busy, much of the time in road construction; however, even while the 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions were once more on the offensive and the 8th Canadian Infantry Brigade was serving in reserve, the Battalion's services were not called upon.

It was finally on September 27 that the 5th Battalion, CMR, was ordered up to the forward area once more, whereupon it moved on its way to relieve the 1st Battalion, CMR, in the front line on September 30.

Further orders were awaiting the unit: *Tomorrow afternoon at about 3 pm we are to attack, capture and consolidate a line of German trench known as REGINA TRENCH. As the front of our objective is well wired the artillery have been heavily engaged today endeavouring to cut the wire. Patrols are to be pushed out as far as possible after dark and report on the cutting. All ranks keyed up and in fine spirits, very eager to attack (5th CMR Battalion War Diary – excerpt from entry of September 30).*

On October 1 the 5th Battalion CMR attacked as planned and initially achieved some success, certain German positions being overrun and captured. However, much of the wire that the artillery had been engaged in destroying the day before still remained uncut; *this* and several enemy counter-attacks put increasing pressure on those in the captured German positions.



(Right above: *Regina Trench Cemetery and some of the area surrounding it which was finally wrested from the Germans by Canadian troops in November of 1916 – photograph from 2014*)

Excerpts from the 5th Battalion, Canadian Mounted Rifles, War Diary entry for October 1, 1916, pertaining to Private Harris' "A" Company: ... "A" Coy on left...



3.16 pm – The first wave of the attacking force went over parapet – "A" Coy led by Lieuts DAUBNEY and CAMPBELL...

...When "A" Coy was about 100 yds fro REGINA Trench enemy opened with m/gun and rifle fire which became very intense during the next 50 yards of the advance, causing many casualties...

(Right above: *Burying Canadian dead on the Somme, likely at a casualty clearing station or a field ambulance – from Illustration or Le Miroir*)

3.23 pm – Two white flares from the left of our objective showed that "A" Coy were in REGINA Trench. Three prisoners captured by "A" Coy...

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4.10 pm - ...strenuous fighting going on in the occupied portion of REGINA Trench being at the time in our possession and tenaciously held by "A" Coy...

5.20 pm - ...reported that "A" Coy was holding REGINA Trench...with Blocks at each end and that the enemy were on both sides...the enemy were able to bomb down REGINA Trench down both flanks...

7.25 pm – remnants of "A" Coy and reinforcements from "D" Coy are still holding out in REGINA Trench with both flanks in the air...

...Our casualties had been so heavy and it would have been unwise to push on any further...

Much of the newly-won terrain was re-taken by the enemy and the Canadian survivors obliged to retreat to their former positions; Regina Trench itself was to remain – apart from a few hours on a later day during that month, October 27 – in German hands until November 10-11.

At about ten o'clock during the evening of October 1, the 5th Battalion, CMR, was relieved by the Royal Canadian Regiment Battalion, whereupon it fell back to Albert where, some hours later, it was then billeted.

The efforts at Regina Trench of that October 1, 1916, had cost a total of the unit two-hundred twenty-four casualties.

Whereas the 5th Battalion, CMR, War Diarist had devoted fifteen full pages of his journal to the events of the day before, the entry for October 2, 1916, is more brief: Battalion moved back to ALBERT.

It was on October 1 that Private Harris was first reported as having been wounded. It may even have been that he was in the process of being evacuated from the field since one document suggests that he was on his way to hospital. However, late that day or early on October 2, a further report had him as wounded and missing in the...trenches near Courcellette.



(Right above: The village of Courcellette seen from the north just over a century after the events of the First Battle of the Somme – photograph from 2017)

The son of Eleazer Harris, fisherman – to whom on May 26, 1916, he had willed his all - and of Dorothy (also found as Dorothea) Harris (née Dymond, deceased September 30, 1917) of New Melbourne, Trinity Bay South, Newfoundland, he was also brother to at least Emma-Jane, to John-Robert, to Abraham Charles and to Edgar.

More than ten months were to pass – it was to be on or about July 27, 1917 – before officialdom considered Private Harris as...Previously reported missing now for official purposes presumed to have died – on or since 2-10-16.

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Selby Harris had enlisted at the *apparent* age of twenty-one years and seven months: date of birth at New Melbourne, Newfoundland, January 1, 1894 (from attestation papers).

Private Selby Harris was entitled to the British War Medal (left) and to the Victory Medal (Inter-Allied War Medal).

The above dossier has been researched, compiled and produced by Alistair Rice. Please email any suggested amendments or content revisions if desired to criceadam@yahoo.ca. Last updated – January 25, 2023.

